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THE
PRICE
OF A
VICTORY,
OR,
AN EXPOSITION
OF THE
DIREFUL EFFECTS
OF
WAR,

A Piece well deſerving the peruſal of all ranks of people, particularly at a Criſis, when it is too much the faſhion

"*To drench the earth with tides of human gore.*"

BRITISH MUSEUM
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THE PRICE OF A VICTORY.

GOOD news! great news! glorious news! cried young *Oſwald*, as he entered his father's houſe. We have got a complete victory, and have killed I don't know how many thouſands of the enemy; and we are to have bonfires and illuminations!

'And ſo, ſaid his father, you think that killing a great many thouſands of human creatures is a thing to be very glad about.

'*Oſ.* No---I do not quite think ſo, neither; but ſurely it is right to be glad that our country has gained a great advantage.

'*F.* No doubt, it is right to wiſh well to our country, as far as its proſperity can be promoted, without injuring the reſt of mankind. But wars are very ſeldom to the real ad-

advantage of any nation: and when they are ever ſo uſeful or neceſſary, ſo many dreadful evils attend them, that a humane man will ſcarcely rejoice in them, if he conſiders at all on the ſubject.

'*Of.* But if our enemies would do us a great deal of miſchief, and we prevent it by beating them, have not we a right to be glad of it?

'*F.* Alas! we are in general little judges which of the parties has the moſt miſchievous intentions. Commonly they are both in the wrong, and ſucceſs will make both of them unjuſt and unreaſonable. But putting that out of the queſtion, he who rejoices in the event of a battle, rejoices in the miſery of many thouſands of his ſpecies, and the thought of that ſhould make him pauſe a little. Suppoſe a ſurgeon were to come

come with a ſmiling countenance, and tell us triumphantly that he had cut off half a dozen legs to-day---what would you think of him?

'*Of.* I ſhould think him very hardhearted.

'*F.* And yet thoſe operations are done for the benefit of the ſufferers, and by their own deſire. But in a battle, the probability is, that none of thoſe engaged on either ſide have any intereſt at all in the cauſe they are fighting for, and moſt of them come there becauſe they cannot help it. In this battle that you are ſo rejoiced about, there have been ten thouſand men killed on the ſpot, and nearly as many wounded.

'*Of.* On both ſides?

'*F.* Yes---but they are *men* on both ſides. Conſider now, that the ten thouſand ſent out of the world in this morning's work, though

though they are paſt feeling themſelves, have left probably two perſons each, on an average, to lament their loſs, either parents, wives, or children. Here are then twenty thouſand people made unhappy at one ſtroke on their account. This, however, is hardly ſo dreadful to think of as the condition of the wounded. At the moment we are talking, eight or ten thouſand more are lying in agony, torn with ſhot or gaſhed with cuts, their wounds all feſtering, ſome hourly to die a moſt excruciating death, others to linger in torture weeks and months, and many doomed to drag on a miſerable exiſtence for the reſt of their lives, with diſeaſed and mutilated bodies.

'*O.* This is ſhocking to think of, indeed!

'*F.* When you light your candles, then, this

this evening, *think what they coſt.*

'*Oſ.* But every body elſe is glad, and ſeem to think nothing of theſe things.

'*F.* True--- they do *not* think of them. If they did, I cannot ſuppoſe they would be ſo void of feeling as to enjoy themſelves in merriment when ſo many of their fellow-creatures are made miſerable. Do you not remember when poor *Dickens* had his leg broken to pieces by a loaded waggon, how all the town pitied him?

'*Oſ.* Yes, very well. I could not ſleep the night after for thinking of him.

'*F.* But here are thouſands ſuffering as much as he, and we ſcarce beſtow a ſingle thought on them. If any one of theſe poor creatures were before our eyes, we ſhould probably feel much more than we now do for all together. Shall I tell you a ſtory of

a

a ſoldier's fortune, that came to my own knowledge?

'*Of.* Yes---pray do!

'*F.* In the village where I went to ſchool, there was an honeſt induſtrious weaver and his wife, who had an only ſon, named *Walter*, juſt come to man's eſtate. *Walter* was a good and dutiful lad, and a clever workman, ſo that he was a great help to his parents.

One unlucky day, having gone to the next market town with ſome work, he met with a companion, who took him to the alehouſe and treated him. As he was coming away, a recruiting ſerjeant entered the room, who ſeeing *Walter* to be a likely young fellow, had a great mind to entrap him. He perſuaded him to ſit down again and take a glaſs with him; and kept him in talk with

fine

fine ſtories about a ſoldier's life, till *Walter* got fuddled before he was aware. The ſerjeant then clapt a ſhilling into his hand to drink his majeſty's health, and told him he was enliſted. He was kept there all night, and next morning was taken before a magiſtrate to be ſworn in. *Walter* had now become ſober, and was very ſorry for what he had done; but he was told that he could not get off without paying a guinea ſmart-money. This he knew not how to raiſe; and being likewiſe afraid and aſhamed to face his friends, he took the oath and bounty money, and marched away with the ſerjeant without ever returning home. His poor father and mother, when they heard of the affair, were almoſt heart-broken; and a young woman in the village who was his ſweet-heart, had like to have gone diſtracted,

ed. *Walter* ſent them a line from the firſt ſtage, to bid them farewell, and comfort them. He joined his regiment, which ſoon embarked for Germany, where it continued till the peace. *Walter* once or twice ſent word home of his welfare, but for the laſt year nothing was heard of him.

'*Of.* Where was he then?

'*F.* You ſhall hear. One ſummer's evening, a man in an old red coat, hobbling on crutches, was ſeen to enter the village His countenance was pale and ſickly, his cheeks hollow, and his whole appearance beſpoke extreme wretchedneſs. Several people gathered round him, looking earneſtly in his face. Among theſe, a young woman, having gazed at him a while, cried out my *Walter!* and fainted away. *Walter* fell on the ground beſide her. His father and mother

ther being fetched by ſome of the ſpectators, came and took him in their arms, weeping bitterly. I ſaw the whole ſcene, and ſhall never forget it. At length the neighbours helped them into the houſe, where *Walter* told them the following ſtory.

" At the laſt great battle that our troops gained in Germany, I was among the firſt engaged, and received a ſhot that broke my thigh. I fell, and preſently after, our regiment was forced to retreat. A ſquadron of the enemy's horſe came galloping down upon us. A trooper making a blow at me with his ſabre as I lay, I lifted up my arm to ſave my head, and got a cut which divided all the ſinews at the back of my wriſt. Soon after, the enemy were driven back and came acroſs us again. A horſe ſet his foot on my ſide, and broke three of my ribs.

ribs. The action was long and bloody, and the wounded on both ſides were left on the field all night. A dreadful night it was to me, you may think! I had fainted through loſs of blood, and when I recovered, I was tormented with thirſt, and the cold air made my wounds ſmart intolerably. About noon next day, waggons came to carry away thoſe who remained alive; and I, with a number of others, was put into one to be conveyed to the next town. The motion of the carriage was terrible to my broken bones--every jolt went to my heart. We were taken to an hoſpital, which was crammed as full as it could hold; and we ſhould all have been ſuffocated with the heat and ſtench, had not a fever broke out, which ſoon thinned our numbers. I took it, and was twice given over; however, I ſtruggled

through. But my wounds proved ſo difficult to heal, that it was almoſt a twelvemonth before I could be diſcharged. A great deal of the bone of my thigh came away in ſplinters, and left the limb crooked and uſeleſs as you ſee. I entirely loſt the uſe of three fingers of my right hand; and my broken ribs made me ſpit blood a long time, and have left a cough and difficulty of breathing, which I believe will bring me to my grave. I was ſent home and diſcharged from the army, and I have begged my way hither as well as I could. I am told that the peace has left the affairs of my country juſt as they were before; but who will reſtore me my health and limbs? I am put on the liſt for a Chelſea penſioner, which will ſupport me, if I live to receive it, without being a burthen to my friends. That is all

that

that remains for *Walter* now!"

'*Of.* Poor *Walter!* What became of him afterwards?

'*F.* The wound of his thigh broke out afreſh, and diſcharged more ſplinters after a great deal of pain and fever. As winter came on, his cough increaſed. He waſted to a ſkeleton, and died the next ſpring. The young woman his ſweetheart, ſet up with him every night to the laſt; and ſoon after his death ſhe fell into a conſumption, and followed him. The old people, deprived of the ſtay and comfort of their age, fell into deſpair and poverty, and were taken into the workhouſe, where they ended their days.

'This was the hiſtory of *Walter the Soldier.* It has been that of thouſands more; and will be that of many a poor fellow over whoſe

whoſe fate you are now rejoicing. Such is the *price of a Victory.*'

' O ye, that ſit at home, and cry for war,
Abſorbed yourſelves in luxury and eaſe;
O were ye here, to ſee the dreadful thing,
For which without remorſe ye raiſe the cry!
What piteous havock of the human kind,
What multiplied affliction, direful ſcenes,
That outrage human nature. O ſhame, ſhame,
Ye vaunt your feelings, and of mercy talk,
And yet can pray for this; bluſh if ye can.
Where are the thouſands, that this morning ſhone,
With all the pride, and circumſtance of war,
In health, and ſtrength, and beauty?--O how chang'd!
What are they now? Some lifeleſs on the ground,
And ſcarce diſtinguiſh'd from the trampled clay;
Some mangled hideous things, ſcarce warm with being,

Are

Are left to range, a warning ſpectacle
To ſhew mankind the bitter fruits of war.'

Heav'ns! let a ſpent and rambling ſhot
Touch *but a* prince's *hat or coat,*
Expanded are the hundred mouths of Fame;
Whilſt braver thouſands (but untitled *wretches),*
Swept by the ſword, ſhall drop like paltry vetches,
Their fate unpitied, and unheard their name!

FINIS.